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THE ONE BIG UNION

WILL IT EMANCIPATE THE WORKER?

BY

P. S. CLEARY

PRESIDENT OF THE CATHOLIC FEDERATION



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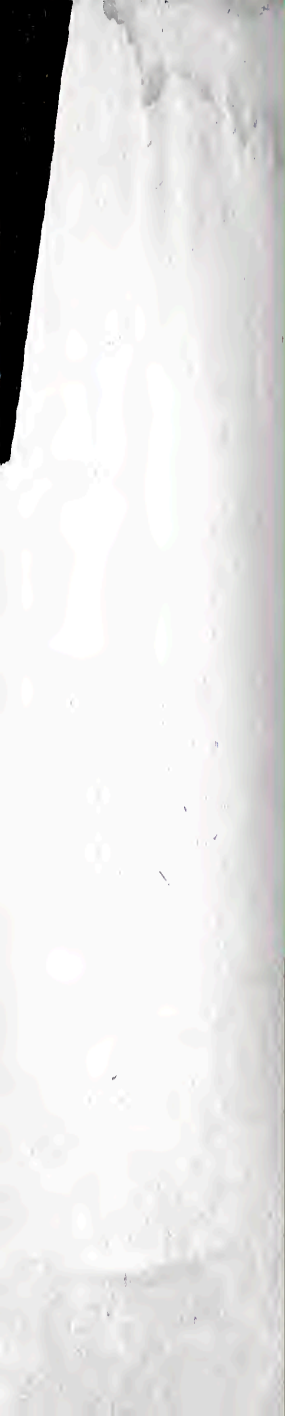
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1919

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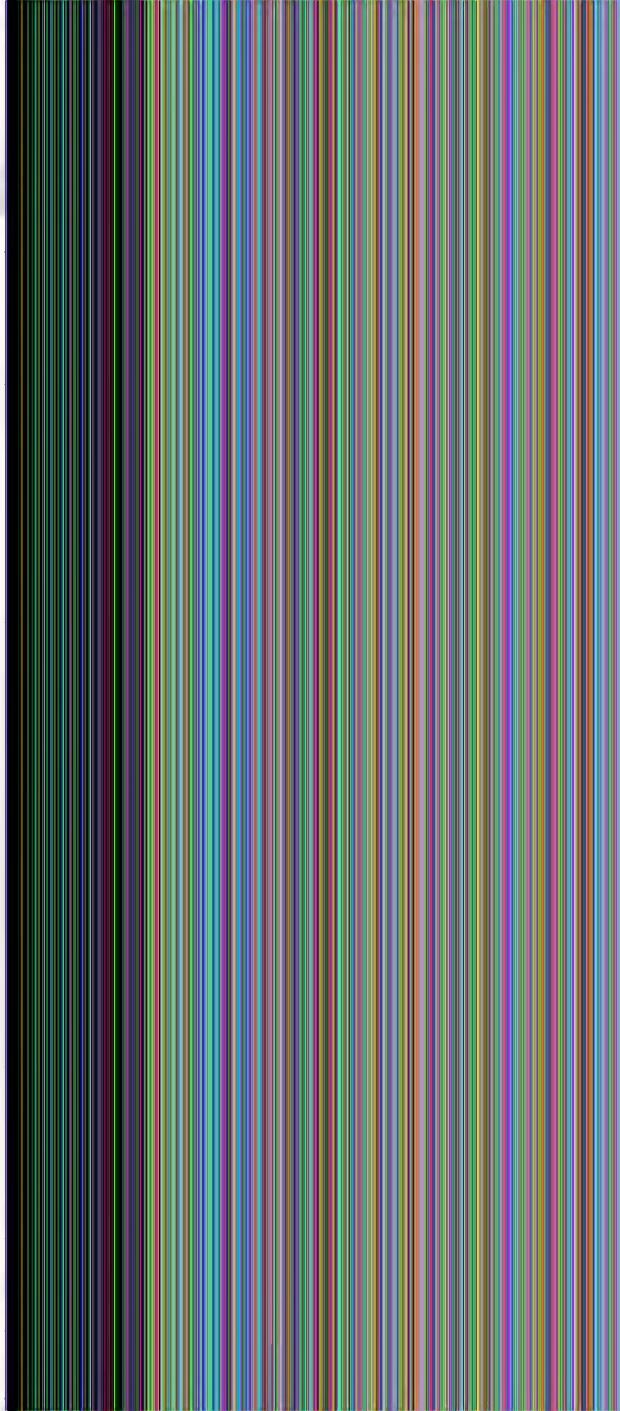
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PART I

THE PRESENT CONDITION OF LABOUR

THE much prophesied and apparently inevitable war being over, we are now faced in every country by a labour conflict, equally prophesied and equally inevitable. Whether it be true or not, as the German Professor Hanser argues, that a world-war between the big industrial nations had become an economic necessity, owing to the uncontrollable impetus of quantitative production, there is no doubt that the mighty struggle has precipitated a conflict between Capitalism and Labour, even in countries not directly engaged in the war.

The past four years have been equivalent to a century of social education for the workers. At an early stage they realized the weakness and waste of the capitalistic system; during the war they learned their own strength; before its close they experienced the futility of State socialism. In the welter of reconstruction, to which the State, the capitalists, and the workers are alike giving feverish attention, it is perhaps quite natural that the section which has the most to gain, and possesses a vast superiority in numbers, should be sorely tempted to try the shortest way to the millennium. In the effort of Capitalism to re-direct industrial production into the old channels, retaining where possible the advantages given to it by quasi-military organization, Labour sees an opportunity to outflank it. The opponents stand, as it were, on a Hindenburg Line, and each is searching for the vulnerable salient. The problem for the statesman is to bring about an equitable peace—to restore stability, while preserving the nation. That there

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are able and well-intentioned leaders on both sides, we have reason to hope; but that there are evil men in both camps we have cause to know. Whatever schemes are put forth must be submitted to the tests of knowledge and experience. They must satisfy ethical, economic, and political requirements, if they are to be successful. They must be practical, not based on the dreams of neurotic enthusiasts or selfish agitators.

One of these schemes is now attracting some attention in Australia. Its influences would have been quite negligible, if its propaganda had not been insidiously spread among working youth for some years, while the Labour leaders who might be expected to watch the interests of their followers looked idly on. It seemed to be nobody's business to "put the acid" on bogus social programmes. But the scheme has now come into the open as the "One Big Union," and its promoters have made an attempt to capture the Labour Unions; it is, therefore, a fitting time to test its promises, in order not only to show that it cannot attain its object, but to sift the good from the bad in its aims and methods, and to indicate a course more likely to lead to the emancipation of the workers.

It will be necessary to lay down our foundations. We must make clear what we mean by Capitalism and by Labour, and show their mutual relations as they are, and as they ought to be. We can then discuss methods allegedly capable of bringing about the desired end. Among such methods we shall consider the One Big Union.

Capitalism must not be confused with capital. By Capitalism we mean in the first place the domination of capital, particularly money-capital, over the entire economic field; secondly, the subordination of all interests connected with production to the one consideration of personal gain. The "class-war," in which industrial unrest is the most conspicuous feature, is not between capital and labour, but

between supporters of the economic system known as Capitalism and the workers. Its combatants are not grades of society, or producers and consumers. They are the classes that produce on one side, and on the other the class that has obtained absolute control of production and sole ownership of the product. The workers know quite well that there are three necessary factors in production: land, which supplies the materials; capital, which contributes the sinews; and labour, which provides the power. But they claim that no one of these factors is entitled to more than its share of the product. Capital, by acquiring ownership of the materials and of the product, is thereby placed in a position to levy unjust toll on the workers, both directly as workers and indirectly as consumers.

Labour's aim, therefore, should be to unite with other consumers, in order to adjust the interests of the three factors in production and, by bringing about production for use and not for profiteering, to prevent the exploitation of consumers and workers alike. The coalition should claim that, as with the League of Nations, there should be no secrecy between the parties to the social compact; that the worker must not be considered as a mere "hand" or instrument of the capitalist, but as a man having a soul to save and an equal right with all other citizens to liberty and self-government; that, in order to exercise this right, he must be given a full knowledge of prices and profits, and an equal voice in the direction of production. Otherwise it will not be possible to make a fair adjustment of the shares of capital and labour in the product, or to assess a just price to be charged against the consumer, whose interest, as we have seen, is of vital importance to the worker. The point to be kept in mind is that men must be considered before property. This being secured, whatever is good and noble in our civilization should be conserved. The aim of the highest democracy is distributive justice.

During the twenty-five years which elapsed between the London dock strike and the beginning of the great war, capitalism and labour have been preparing for a catastrophic outbreak of the "class-struggle." It was in 1889 that skilled unionists first realized the strength of the unskilled masses, and the unity of their interests. Capitalism realized the position also, and set about organizing and consolidating its forces with phenomenal rapidity. By means of amalgamations, combines, and federations, the financiers (masquerading as "Captains of Industry") have attained controlling power in the political, industrial, and commercial life of every nation. It is characteristic of Parliaments that they load their statute books with Acts and Regulations restricting the activities of labour unions. But there are no effective laws to restrain capitalists from combining for any object, from ruthlessly destroying "blackleg" capitalists, from doing what they like with their funds, from dismissing employees without reason or compensation. All legislation is based on the theory that the business belongs to the capitalist—who is usually a financier or the head of a financial institution; regardless of the fact that capital is a commodity for the use of the community, and not for the mere enrichment of a section. By these methods, the conditions so deplored by Pope Leo XIII—"The concentration of so many branches of trade in the hands of a few individuals, so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the masses of the poor a yoke little better than slavery itself"—have been considerably aggravated.

To pass from generalities to facts, we find that just prior to the war four per cent. of the population of Britain owned ninety per cent. of the wealth; and in the United States two per cent. of the people own sixty per cent. of the national wealth, while, at the other end of the scale, sixty per cent. hold only five per cent. When, therefore, Mr.

Lloyd George appeals to the miners not to imperil the export trade, he finds them cold; when he tells them that to grant their demands would mean a heavy increase in the price of steel and coal, they want to see balance-sheets. They have been told that the excess profits made by the capitalists during the war amount to no less than £450,000,000.

The attitude of Capitalism towards the worker and the consumer may be illustrated by two authenticated anecdotes. When the President of the American Sugar Company was asked, before the Industrial Commission of 1900, if he thought it was fair to make consumers pay dividends on an over-capitalisation of twenty-five millions, he answered: "I think it is fair to get out of the consumer all you can." He went on, "I do not care two cents for your ethics. I do not know enough of them to apply them." And when the late Pierpont Morgan was asked before witnesses if he thought that ten dollars a week was enough for a waterside worker, he replied that he believed it was, "if that was all he could get and took it." We are justly shocked when Vincent St. John, the I.W.W. historian, writes: "The question of right and wrong does not concern us." But what difference is there between his ethics and those of the Captains of Industry?

Here in Australia, Capitalism is no less solidly entrenched. The shipping combine can paralyse any section of trade which refuses to accept its terms. The Merchants' Associations can destroy any trader who cuts their schedules of prices. The Employers' Federation is formed expressly for the combat with Labour. Its programme was outlined in the Melbourne *Argus* of August 7, 1917. "The idea" says the *Argus*, "is to follow upon Labour's example, and have a union of employers. This union will not be on the lines of the existing organizations, that embrace employers

Capitalist
Organization
in Australia.

generally, but will be on the basis of trade groups. Under the proposal all the trades connected with one industry will be organized as a group. Each trade will form its association, each association will send delegates to a council, and the council will control the (industrial) group. It will be compulsory on employers to join, if the Labour unions are to be successfully encountered." Here we have in the ranks of Capitalism the I.W.W. plan of organization, put into operation twelve months before the One Big Union was started. And when the employers' union says that membership is compulsory, it is compulsory. Capitalism has methods of compulsion which are impossible to Labour.

Labour, on its side, has sought by various methods of organization to free itself from the shackles which were so relentlessly binding it. In England and in English-speaking countries much was expected from craft unionism, and on the whole the craft unions have served the workers well. Objectives, all more or less socialistic, have been placed before the people by able writers; and it is characteristic of the race that the so-called socialism was mostly of a practical kind, and not overlaid by the fads of Continental Socialists, who encumber their schemes with foolish marriage notions, birth control, socialisation of children, and other matters which disgust the sane and the clean-minded. Within the present generation trade unionism has been enabled by extensions of the franchise to add direct political representation to its other methods; and, though enthusiasts have been disappointed with the results, most people will be of opinion that the experiment has not yet been fairly tested. The man who expects to anticipate a century's constitutional development in one generation must be very young indeed. It takes a class some time to turn the current of thought in countries where, up to a decade ago, "freetrade" and "protection" were the burning questions among a people brought up on the old dry-as-dust

political economy. It is something to have put Adam Smith on the top shelf.

With thorough outside organization, Labour in politics can do good work yet. There is nothing to prevent Labour from forcing Parliament to fix the prices of commodities; to regulate the interest on capital; to insist on prompt publication of balance-sheets for all industrial businesses, according to schedules which will leave no loop-hole for disguising profits; to prevent forestalling and monopoly; to establish self-government in industry, either on the Whitley lines, or better ones if they can be framed. Many of these steps were taken in war-time; they stand good in times of peace. Parliaments would have done better if Labour had better representation; and with the franchise at its command, what is there to stop it?

Side by side with political representation, Labour evolved what appears to be a more effective method of organizing its forces. Realizing that the universal use of machinery in huge businesses enormously increased the proportion of unskilled and partly skilled workers, it became clear that craft unionism required to be buttressed by new methods. The tool a man uses is no longer the indicator of his trade. He must be classified by the service for which his labour is given. That, and no more, is the meaning of industrial organization; and, as we have seen, it is considered a suitable method for the Employers' Federation. But we shall see later that the term "industrial organization" has become the catchword for as many rotten projects as the term "socialism." Like the countryman on his first visit to town, the worker is easily gulled by glib schemers, lavish of glowing promises. The hard-working man has little time to do hard thinking, even if he had the opportunity. ⁴He is justly suspicious of the public press (which, generally speaking, is the ally of Capitalism), and he is too apt to take on trust statements made in the name of Labour,

which may have no foundation in fact and no justification in theory.

The Evils of Capitalism.

The result of the unnatural development of Capitalism is a condition of social instability just as dangerous to the rich as it is to the poor. Unless the class which controls government is inspired by justice, there is a grave risk that the oppressed classes will be driven to excess, as was the *bourgeoisie* in France a century ago, and as were Hampden and his class against the Stuart tyranny. Writers of various shades of opinion declare that the controllers of Capitalism have become so obsessed by the mad struggle for wealth as to have outrun discretion. Under the protection of monopolies—which they pretend will enable them to reduce the cost of production—they increase the prices of their commodities. When they are compelled to increase wages—and it is on record that wages are never increased except under compulsion—they put up prices to a greater extent. In order to conceal their plunder, they disguise their statements of profits by every trick known to the financial juggler. They waste huge sums on unnecessary middlemen, a class largely created by competitive Capitalism. In their efforts to increase production they are continually harassing the workers by new "efficiency" schemes, and faster machinery. The whole tendency of Capitalism is to lower the status of the working man by increasing the efficiency of the machine. Quantitative production is the sole object, and it is considered not immoral to destroy products rather than cheapen the market. Capitalism would make man exist to serve production; but the proper view is that production must be made to serve man. These evils bring their punishment with them. By lowering the status of the workers, their intellect and character are lowered also, and they become more easily the tools of revolution. Anarchy flourishes among the "submerged" classes. Quantitative production, by compelling com-

petition for markets, is also a fruitful cause of war. Hitherto it has been possible to slacken production without causing serious loss to the capitalist; but now his huge organizations have become so costly that "overhead charges" compel him to go on without rest.

One of the gravest evils of the capitalistic system is its deliberate and callous use of a margin of unemployed labour—a percentage of casual workers which is said to be necessary for industrial stability, but for whose sustenance Capitalism makes no provision. Under paganism the chattel slave was property and his owner maintained him, whether sick or at work; under serfdom the worker was bound to the soil and enjoyed its frugal fruits. But in freeing the labourer the overlords shook off all responsibility. The worker may have a vote, but nobody is responsible if he starves. In any fair solution each section of industry must be made to bear the cost of its sick and unemployed, as it did in the days of Guilds. The Capitalist is maintained by his business, whether he is sick or idle; similarly, if the so-called "periods of over- and under-production" are justification for keeping a margin of unemployed, the upkeep of that margin is a fair charge on the industry, and not on the State—for the State represents the consumers. In fact, of course, this margin is a reserve army of penniless dependents, kept so for use in breaking strikes.

The outbreak of the war found Capitalism utterly incapable of coping with the problem of efficient production. Perhaps we are not able to realize this fully in Australia, where so little was demanded of war industry, and where so many activities, such as railways, are owned by the State. We saw some of it, however, in the waste and inefficiency connected with the inter-state shipping system. But in Britain and the United States the failure of the capitalistic system was overwhelming. In order to prevent waste,

*The
Unemployed
Margin.*

*The
Capitalistic
System in
War-Time.*

weakness and inefficiency the Governments had to step in and prop up the rotten system, though even in time of peril they were not able or willing to eradicate the evils of Capitalism. Mr. Lloyd George appealed to the Labour Congress: "We can win this war with you; we cannot win it without you." He declared that the Government would take over and run the mines, railways, shipping, and factories, and control the distribution of foodstuffs and materials. Labour gave up without a struggle many of the fruits of a century of organization. It agreed to abstain from strikes and to extend the hours of work; it permitted the dilution of labour to allow women and children to do men's work, while the men were conscripted for the army; it yielded the worker's right to transfer his services from one place to another. But both Labour and the Government were outmaneuvered at every turn by the capitalists. Government failed to nationalize the industries, but was dithered into standing behind the capitalist. Production increased enormously, and so did profits. Wages soared but not so high as prices. The dishonesty of the employers led to a few (remarkably few) labour troubles; but, while the public press made a noise about every little labour outbreak, it was silent about the ruthless profiteering, the treasonable contract scandals, and the financial jugglery that was going on all the time. Though a promise was made that after the war all trade union rights would be immediately restored, great uneasiness prevailed in labour circles. The *Times Industrial Supplement* was so enamoured of the increased production that it declared "we must munitionize our industries"—which would mean that the State would be expected to stand behind the profiteer for all time, while he made his millions by the aid of conscripted labour. The ideal of British supremacy was "the nation under orders" in workshop, mine, and mill.

Is it any wonder that some of the workers, with this

dark outlook before them, listened to the whispers of Bolshevism? Many of their ideals were shattered. They realized the futility of State Capitalism, which would be no better for them than private Capitalism. Some of their leaders were in the Cabinet, and were inclined to preach at them. The hour was at hand for the glib and irresponsible agitator with his certain cure for all ills. He talked of Internationalism and other big things, and would claim comradeship with the inhabitants of Mars if it suited his schemes. Such is the origin of the One Big Union proposal. When it reaches its aim, Britisher and Yankee, Australian and Jap, Coolie and Hottentot, will all be paying their dues to a Grand International Council.

PART II

A SYNDICALIST SCHEME

The One Big Union. The Australian Labour leaders, some of whom are no longer labour leaders, are very much to blame for the spread of this absurd propaganda. It should have been their duty to investigate the nostrums of newcomers, and to test their claims. There is no difficulty in showing that the syndicalist philosophy (of which the One Big Union is a crude product) can neither free the workers, nor even unite them. It is like building a brick house without mortar. The strongest attacks of syndicalists on Capitalism are trifles compared with the attacks they make on each other. They build their scheme on distrust and suspicion, and end up by distrusting each other.

At present the One Big Union is in the tadpole stage, much head and a very thin tail. One of its Melbourne comrades, Mr. Dodds, makes no bones about telling its leaders so. For some time it had been incubating quietly by means of I.W.W. "literature" imported from America. But when the I.W.W. was suppressed as such, a section of it remains essayed to start an Australian union on a slightly disguised basis. The goods in the shop window are marked "Industrial Organization"; but "made in America" is visible on every article, and on the objective. Industrial organization, in itself, is not objectionable. Some years ago, the Sydney trade unionists prepared a scheme on the lines of the British Labour Movement, but for some reason it was dropped. In Britain the craft unions are used as a basis for organization; but the American scheme appeals

solely to the unskilled workers, and does not conceal its contempt for craft unions.

It seems to us that the constitution of the Australian *The A.W.U.* Workers' Union provided the soil for this Labour weed. The A.W.U. has added considerable strength to the Labour Movement, particularly in its earlier stages. There are no more generous and steadfast Labour men in Australia than the country workers of the A.W.U. Under able organizers it became a widespread body, established a newspaper, and succeeded in getting representatives into Parliament. Extending its influence, it accepted affiliation with other unions of non-skilled labourers; in the end, though it had never been over-particular that its members should be shearers, it felt that the title "Workers' Union" would better express its ideals than its birth-name "Shearers' Union." As the subsidiary unions increased, it conceived the idea of capturing the entire Labour Movement, and in time found itself able to dominate both the Political Labour Conference and the Central Labour Council of the Unions. It is this influence, emanating mainly from unskilled workers, which has disrupted political labour and seriously disorganized the Sydney Labour Council. A great impetus was given to unionism by industrial legislation (since 1906 no fewer than 445 unions have been formed, enormously increasing the strength of leagued Labour), and the political success of the Labour Party at the polls demoralized men who saw lucrative positions in their grasp, if they were prepared to do a little scheming in the Leagues. The result is that probably thirty per cent. of league members are potential politicians, ready to eat each other for "take-walk" seats. When the time of trial came, these men possessed neither the ability, nor the training, nor the integrity to win through, and the political machine broke down.

Labour need not be disheartened by one failure. But the men to reconstruct it are not the men who broke it, many of whom are themselves defeated aspirants for political life. We should ask ourselves "May it not be better to discard the weak parts of the old machine, rather than import a new machine which has been a failure wherever it has been tried?" It is significant that, though the A.W.U. presided at its inception, it is now by no means so keen on the One Big Union.

*Incubating
the Scheme.*

The scheme for the One Big Union was first drawn up and adopted at a Trade Union Congress held in Sydney on August 6, 1918. The unions were not fully represented at this congress, ten or twelve of them having broken away from the Sydney Labour Council owing to differences in war policy. The congress appointed an organizing and propaganda committee, which issued a circular to the unions asking them to take a ballot on the scheme, and to send in the result by November 12. In order to assist members to make up their minds, the committee issued a constitution (with preamble) and a couple of leaflets adapted from American models. These leaflets contained no facts or figures, but were merely glowing prophecies of the coming dawn. However, by the aid of the constitution, and of newspaper articles by authorized exponents of the scheme, we are able to place it in its setting. As might be expected, there is no evidence of original thought about it; but one point sticks out clearly. It is that the originators of the movement were blankly ignorant of its history as well as of its objective. All that unionists were asked to do was well expressed by the *Australian Worker* of September 19, 1918, "Let us accomplish the One Big Union, and all else shall be added unto us." We can read its propaganda till our eyelids grow heavy and red, and we cannot get an inch farther in our search for enlightenment.

One cannot but admire the audacity of the propaganda committee in asking the unions to vote on the scheme at all. An official leaflet tells us that the One Big Union "gives the lie to the notion which dominates the ordinary trade or craft union that the interests of employers and workers are harmonious"; and Trautmann's *One Great Union* says "The trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers." Another writer, Norman C. Anderson, declares that trade unionism is an antiquated product of Capitalism, and forecasts the opposition of certain "aristocratic unions" to the scheme. The trade unions were therefore asked, in the circular issued by the Organizing Committee, to commit suicide—of course, after making their wills—and to get it over before November 12. If they had performed that act of harikari (which they did not) what would have been the fate of their members?

These questions the more experienced unionists asked; but they did not get business answers. Poetical outbursts may suit Postmasters-General, but they won't boil the billy. It's all very well to read in the *Australian Worker* of October 31: "We are on the eve of a new world. . . . The new world is going to come by the new unity. All worlds are born in that way. . . . Millions of particles of matter are flying about in space, apparently unrelated, and in a condition of the wildest disorder. Suddenly they begin to assemble together, moved by a mutual attraction, or in response to some centralizing and co-ordinating principle. A great light shines where before was darkness. . . . That's why it is possible to get so enthusiastic about the One Big Union." When the average trade unionist reaches

*To Kill the
Craft Unions.*

Q.B.U. Post.

*How fortunate it is for Labour that such enlightened thinkers have made this discovery before it was too late!

this amazing conclusion he is apt to murmur: "Take away the highbrow stuff and tell us if the scheme is doing anything, anywhere?" And, when he is informed that it is making wonderful progress in almost every civilized country, he obviously retorts: "As, for instance . . .?"

O.B.U.
Tactics.

It soon became apparent that trade unionists were not quite as gullible as the inventors of the scheme imagined. Then strange things began to happen. The original idea was to "launch" the Union on October 14. But, as not infrequently happens with launchings in Australia, the event did not come off. Then it was proposed to go on with a ballot of trade union members; for reasons variously given, the ballot was not taken. On January 9 (just before the Melbourne Conference) Mr. Garden, the General Secretary, is reported in the *Australian Worker* as saying: "We have every reason to be satisfied with practically unanimous support from all the States and nearly all the aggregations of active unionists. We have no fear for the future." After the Melbourne Conference, Mr. Garden said, on January 21: "We have to use strategy against strategy. . . . We originally intended that we should go back to our respective provinces and urge all the workers there to take a ballot whether they would favour the Big Union or not, but we have changed our opinions since." He then sketched a scheme whereby the One Big Union organizers would start "workshop committees" of a few select men "on the lines of the Hamburg Soviets, or the Russian Bolsheviks," and "force the unions to compel their officials to take a ballot."

This indiscreet talk alarmed other leaders; Mr. Malvogue, the Melbourne secretary, denied that there was any intention to abandon the free ballot, and characterised the New South Wales proposal as an "opposition scheme." The Adelaide delegate to the Melbourne Conference

further denied that the minority had decided to club the majority into submission, while his colleague, Mr. Howard, said he was disappointed with the scheme, as he could not see that the Big Union would secure freedom for the masses. Mr. Gardin was also challenged at Adelaide for his statement that every State had adopted the scheme. An Adelaide ex-President, Mr. Melbourne, said that delegates knew that statement to be incorrect, and that "they could not follow a leader who would make such an inaccurate statement." The Adelaide Trades and Labour Council "reprobated" the scheme by 28 votes to 27. Perth (W.A.) Trade and Labour Council supplies the most humorous episode in the campaign to date. They had not received any copies of the scheme, but they resolved to adopt it. One fact stands clear in this story. Some of the leaders are described by their associates as reckless in their statements, and under such circumstances the basis of confidence is wanting.

The committee of the Sydney Labour Council, which ^{The O.B.U.} drafted the constitution of the One Big Union, ^{and the} decided that ^{L.H.U.} the official name of the organization shall be "The Workers' Industrial Union of Australia," and that its object shall be to bind together all the "wage-workers" in every industry to achieve the objective set forth in the Preamble. It must be said that the committee made no attempt at originality, either in the preamble, or in the industrial classification of the members, or in the Union's system of government. The preamble, with a few verbal changes, is taken from the preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World; the classification and system of government are copied from Trautmann, an I.W.W. leader, who in turn adopted them from the French. We give in parallel columns the I.W.W. preamble and its Australian counterpart.

THE I.W.W. PREAMBLE.

(a) The working class and the employing class have nothing in common.

(b) There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among the millions of working people, and the few who make up the employing class have all the good things of life.

(c) Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the Workers of the World organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system The Trade Unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the workers have interests in common with their employers.

AUSTRALIAN O.B.U. PREAMBLE.

(a) We hold that there is a class struggle in society, and that the struggle is caused by the capitalist class owning the means of production, to which the working class must have access in order to live. The working class produce all value. . . . The interests of these two classes are in constant conflict.

(b) There can be no peace so long as want and hunger are found among millions of working people, and the few who constitute the employing class have all the good things of life.

(c) Between these two classes the struggle must continue until Capitalism is abolished. Capitalism can only be abolished by the workers uniting in one class-conscious economic organization to take and hold the means of production by revolutionary, industrial and political action. "Revolutionary action" means action to secure a complete change, namely the abolition of capitalistic ownership of the means of production—whether privately or through the State—and the establishment in its place of social ownership by the whole community. Long experience has proved the hopelessness of existing political and industrial methods, which aim at mending and rendering tolerable, and thereby perpetuating Capitalism, instead of ending it.

- (d) The Trade Unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage-wars.
- (e) These conditions can be changed, and the interest of the working class upheld, only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.
- (f) By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.
- (g) Craft unionism fosters conditions which allow the employer to pit one set of workers against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby defeating each in turn.
- (h) These conditions can be changed, and the interests of the working class advanced, only by an organization so constituted that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries shall take concerted action when deemed necessary, thereby making an injury to one an injury to all.
- (i) The new Industrial Republic of Labour is forming itself within the shell of the present Capitalistic society. When the workers are organized, the shell shall break and Labour emerge free. (This paragraph is not from the O.B.U. preamble, but from a leaflet signed by the general secretary).

It will be seen that where the O.B.U. preamble departs from its model it is apt to get bogged. Take the long-winded third paragraph. Can anyone tell us what is meant by abolishing State ownership, and establishing in its place ownership by the whole community? Mr. Judd, who was a delegate at all conferences, complains that it is unfair to lead the public to believe that the I.W.W. and O.B.U. preambles are practically identical. The vital difference, he contends, is that the O.B.U. preamble stands for political action on the highest civilized plane (whatever that may mean) while the I.W.W. relies on industrial action alone. But Mr. Judd also says that the O.B.U. aims at "abolishing the existing system and its parliament and inaugurating an industrial parliament," a statement that convicts him of

Exclusive
Propagandists.

throwing dust in the eyes of workers who have no time for the I.W.W. Mr. F. D. Williams, one of the South Australian delegates, reported to the Adelaide Trades and Labour Council on February 9 that the O.B.U. would make use of politics until it was able to take over industry. But the *Brisbane Worker* gives the show away, in its issue of October 17, 1908, by stating that Mr. Garden mentioned at a Victorian preparatory conference that the scheme was the cream of the thought of men like Debs, De Leon, and Trautmann, who are the principal propagandists of the I.W.W. in America. Trautmann teaches (*One Great Union*, page 25) that representatives elected by the workers in their industrial organizations will constitute the parliament of the future for municipal, national, and international affairs. But Trautmann can afford to be honest. He is not throwing out bait to catch union flatheads, for the I.W.W. ignores trade unionism altogether, while the O.B.U. wants it to come in and be killed.

*An Old
Scheme in
Disguise.*

The idea of one big industrial union is by no means new. It has been tried in many countries, and has invariably failed. Robert Owen, who first attempted the scheme of a "General Union of the Producing Classes" 86 years ago, was an able man, with an honest desire to help the workers. In his scheme, each department would manage its own trade, just as in the O.B.U. The whole was to be governed by a "Grand National Consolidated Trades Union," which would employ paid lecturers to give courses in the new philosophy. By 1836 it had 100,000 members, but it was gradually displaced in the workers' minds by political Chartism and orthodox craft unionism. One-Big-Unionists say that it is not fair to use the failure of Robert Owen's scheme as an argument against the present movement, because labour organization was not advanced enough in those days to profit by it. Perhaps that is so;

but, if labour conditions are much more advanced now, the credit for that must be given to the craft unions.

In the dark days of the middle nineteenth century industrial unionism dropped into oblivion. Men dissatisfied with labour conditions turned to one or other of the innumerable brands of Socialism, which promised so infallibly to redress the injustice of class rule. It is one of the delusions of the One-Big-Unionists that they are aiming to bring about the solution of the "class struggle" on the lines of Karl Marx. Nothing could be wider of the mark. Marx's idea of the social revolution was a series of evolutions leading to "that more or less rapid transformation of the vast juridical and political superstructure of society which results from the transformation of its economic foundations." The O.B.U. wants to bring about the revolution with one shot. Marx advocated common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange. The O.B.U. repudiates State ownership, and aims at giving both ownership and control of industry to the wage-earners.* To this form of government its founders have given the name of Syndicalism, from the French word *syndicat* a trade union. "The primary object of Syndicalism," says Mr. Philip Snowden, "is to organize all the workers in a trade into one union, and then to federate those unions into a national and, eventually, into an international organization."

The syndicalist, like the anarchist, repudiates the State. "The expressed theory of most syndicalists," says Mr. G. D. H. Cole (*World of Labour*, page 499) "is that the State must be destroyed, root and branch; it must not only be cleared out of industry, but abolished altogether. The producers, organized in industrial unions, trades councils,

*What the rest of the public are to do is not stated. Possibly they may form another Big Union to capture the business back again.

*The Rise of
Syndicalism.*

and in a general federation of these, are perfectly capable of carrying on the work of the nation." And again, "Anarchism is the father of Syndicalism; but trade unionism is its mother, and it was in the fertile womb of trade unionism that, in the nineties (in France) the Anarchist seed grew unseen." In place of political action, its method of government is to be "direct action." Trautmann, the cream of whose thought (according to Mr. Gardner) inspired the self-chosen few at Melbourne, says of "direct action"—a fundamental method of the O.B.U.—that it is "any and all obstructions placed in the process of production, and is tantamount to the 'propaganda of deed' of the terrorist anarchists." Readers will perceive that every writer quoted in this inquiry is a labour man or a syndicalist. This is not an apology for Capitalism, and our object is to show that the One Big Union cannot conquer it, and that the workers would be worse off if it did.

As Mr. Cole says, anarchism crept unseen into the French trade unions, where Syndicalism had its birth. French labourites have always fallen easy victims to anarchism, from which they have earned more bullets than benefits. Like the British, French labour unionism underwent a century of persecution. When Waldeck-Rousseau passed the Law of 1884, giving the workers the right of combination, they saw in some of its red-tape provisions a desire to bring them into close touch with the State; and they had no reason to love State Departments. The opposite result followed; they fled to the arms of the political socialists, under Jules Guesde, who formed them into a Federation of Trade Unions. Their objective was to send a strong body of Socialists into Parliament; but they were not very successful, for French trade unionism had intensely local ideals.

Three years later, however, the Paris Municipal Council made an experiment which led to a complete revolution in

French labour methods. It opened a "Bourse du Travail" or Labour Bureau, which was to be a centre for the trade unions of the district, an employment exchange, and a library and club room. The idea caught on. Bourses sprang up in many towns, and soon became centres of revolutionary activity—much to the disgust of the staid municipal councillors. Quite a number of able men began public life in their debating rooms. In 1893 they formed a Federation of Bourses, and in the following year affiliated with the Federation of Trade Unions, thus forming the General Federation of Labour (*Confédération Générale du Travail*, universally known as the C.G.T.). They formed the radical wing of the new body, and followed their leader, Aristide Briand, in his contest with Guesde for the leadership of Labour. Briand was ably assisted by the General Secretary, Fernand Pelloutier, a great organizer, who developed the idealism and anarchism which marked the C.G.T. Briand introduced the policy of the "general strike," and his success in carrying it against the Guesdists at the National Congress of 1894 led to Guesde's retirement. It was then submitted to the unions; but it was not finally adopted until eight years' hard work had been spent in propaganda, in which Briand played a principal part. He was also the first to use the terms "sabotage" and "direct action," which are now recognized as special methods of Syndicalism.

Another seven years passed, and the founder of syndicalism became Premier of France. When his successors of the C.G.T. attempted to practise the methods which he taught them, he turned the guns of the soldiers on them. One-Big-Unionism is no more protected against the black-leg than was the "effete craft union."

¹ In the manifesto of the C.G.T. we find the familiar division of the State into two classes, one of which, the capitalist class, produces nothing; the other, the working

*The Story of
a General
Strike.*

class, produces everything. The manifesto has no time for Parliament. The Socialist who enters Parliament is a traitor; he is on the side of the bourgeoisie and its one-sided laws, backed up by partisan justice, police and army. Let the people by direct action decide everything. Direct action will not mean violence after the first step; Capitalism will yield. The union has no money. What matter; take it from the capitalist class. They got it by theft. "Hungry wolves have nothing to lose; the proletarian has no duty towards the bourgeoisie fatherland; his fatherland is his stomach." This kind of talk went on for more than 15 years, and then the C.G.T. began to meet trouble. The Postal Employees, who were affiliated with the C.G.T., struck work in March, 1909, and demanded the resignation of the Under-Secretary. For a few days matters looked serious. Clemenceau was Premier, and his reply was to dismiss all the strikers. Their leader ("King" Pataud, as the boulevardiers called him, a dismissed electrician) had the lights put out in Paris much more effectively than M. Viviani put out the lights of Heaven a year or two earlier. But three days' rest was enough for the strikers, and they begged to be taken back. The C.G.T. did its best to keep the agitation alive, and decided to call a general strike of all workers for May 1. The railwaymen and miners refused to come out, and the "Bureau Confederal," a body corresponding to the Grand Council of the O.B.U., was compelled to call the strike off.

In October, 1910, the C.G.T. succeeded in getting the railway men out on strike. This time Briand, the former syndicalist, was Premier. He knew the strong and weak points of Syndicalism. He at once mobilised the strikers under the Military Conscription law, and put them, as soldiers, on the engines. He thereby showed how little he believed in his soap-box propaganda to the soldiers: "When you are ordered to fire on insurgent workers, it is your duty to aim

at the heads or the hearts of the officers who would compel you to commit the crime of fratricide." The angry strikers posted up at street corners Briand's incendiary speeches of the past. He was spat at in Parliament. But he kept to his determination. He declared that he had not changed a jot in his principles; but he was now head of the State, and must preserve peace. The strike was over in seven days, and the C.G.T. as a fighting factor was broken. While we thus show the futility of One-Big-Union methods, we cannot admire the Briand type of statesman. How fitting it was, that he should, as Premier, be the man to cable to Mr. Hughes in 1916, urging the workers of Australia to pass conscription.

The inevitable happened. The leaders blamed each other for the failure of the strike. The railwaymen split into sections; the craft unions drew out of the C.G.T. Two years later the executive called a strike of school teachers, but the teachers refused to obey. Since then the French Big Union has lived on its memories. It is odd to find the organization of this dead scheme tacked on to the preamble of the I.N.W. to create the One Big Union. For the I.N.W. is simply mass action. In practice, it does not contain even the rudiments of industrial organization; though its writers love to explain the scheme by diagrams, really copies of the French model, which did try to classify the industries. Trautmann has a huge circle representing a hemisphere. It is divided into sectors of varying sizes. At the centre is a small circle inscribed "Grand Council." The diagram resembles nothing but a spider's web, the Grand Council being the spider. Not one of the lines running to the circumference can be touched without the knowledge of the spider. The rules speak of "local autonomy"; but local autonomy is explained to mean that no local section or division can take any action till it obtains per-

*The Decay of
the French
O.B.U.*

mission from the body above it. It was exactly the same with the C.G.T. The "Bureau Confederal" consisted of seven men, six of whom were secretaries. These men were continually saying that they had no authority, and that the authority rested in the District and other councils. But they made all appointments; ran the journal; and were able to get all their ideas carried out, without appearing to boss the machine. And, when they quarrelled, the Union broke down.

The C.G.T. at its strongest contained about one-third of the trade unionists of France, but this strength chiefly lay in the miners and transport unions. On its councils, the biggest union had the same representation as the smallest, and this weakness is copied by the O.B.U. The fact is that Syndicalism, unlike Socialism, has never appealed to intellectual men. Besides Robert Owen, the only men whose thoughts are worth reading are the Frenchmen, Sorel and Lagardelle. The Americans are merely ranters. Briand wrote a pamphlet entitled "The General Strike and the Revolution," which was used as a kind of charter. The C.G.T. published papers, but neither *The Voice of the People*, nor *Direct Action* attained a circulation of more than 7,000 copies. The movement never obtained any influence over the workers on the land. In a kind of *post mortem*, Lagardelle blames for its failure the tendency of the leaders to get into Parliament. Yet some of the founders of our O.B.U. are in Parliament; some have tried to get there and failed; all are eagerly watching for "cake-walk" seats. The cruellest blow to Syndicalism was when its prophet turned it down. Writing to the Italian Syndicalist Congress in 1926, Sorel said: "Syndicalism has not realized what was expected from it. Many hold that the future will correct the evils of the present; but the author is too old to live in distant hopes." Perhaps the

"Australian Socialist Industrial Republic of Labour" is one of those distant hopes.

Syndicalism never caught on in Germany, the home of so-called scientific socialism—which, considering the enormous industrial development of that Empire, is a very significant fact. In Italy it was used by a group of anarchists to gain recruits. Its history in England is chequered. At the International Socialist Congress held in London in 1896 much excitement was caused when certain French Unions, which had renounced political action, claimed representation. They were rejected by huge majorities. Syndicalism was confused with aggressive trades unionism by the British till 1910, when Haywood, head of the I.W.W., came from the United States to England, and (aided by the versatile Tom Mann, who had been everything by turns and nothing long) made an effort to breathe life into it. Ben Tillett also took some interest in it. English trade unionists were disappointed with their parliamentary representatives, who after all were but a radical wing of the Liberal party, and had no solid backing in the constituencies. Certain decisions of the law courts, notably the Osborne judgment and the strike prosecutions of 1911, angered Labour men; also the "literature" of the I.W.W. had been freely circulated in England for some time. But Haywood made very little impression, except among the hot-headed miners of South Wales, who will grasp any stick to beat the Tories. The vicious attacks of the Tory press also helped Haywood, and gathered around him a number of young men who saw a chance to bring themselves into notoriety. It is easy to get men for the top billets in wild-cat propaganda.

After Haywood's departure, the movement failed to advance, though it has revived since the war began, owing to the out-maneuvring of the Labour leaders by the Government, and the failure to repress profiteering. Tom

*One-Day
Unionism
in England.*

Mann ran a paper for some time, called the *Industrial Syndicalist*; in it he developed a blundering kind of I.W.W.-ism, in which he proposed to hand over the works to the State and let the workers control them. This is not very different from the plan of the Independent Labour Party, but it is poles apart from syndicalism—which, as we learn from the preamble of the O.B.U., will have nothing to do with "ownership through the State." But Mann became disheartened. After all his work, he complained, "not five per cent. of the people understand it." It is plain that he did not understand it himself. We shall see that many of the O.B.U. leaders do not understand it, or else they are not open about it. Ramsay MacDonald says that at the time of his writing (*Socialism and Syndicalism*, 1912) syndicalism was negligible in England, both as a school of thought, and as an organization for action.

The Industrial Workers of the World.

There is no doubt that the most wide-spread organization of syndicalism is the Industrial Workers of the World. The corrupt state of American politics and the growth of huge industrial cities, where vast parks of marvellous machinery are kept ceaselessly at high pressure by hordes of unskilled workers drawn from the half-civilized serfdom of Europe—many of them from an atmosphere of perennial anarchism—who provide a fertile field for revolutionary agitators. Huge combinations, like the Steel Trust, with its 200,000 "hands" make the idea of industrial organization feasible, and the unscrupulous methods of Big Capitalism destroy all moral sense in the workers, as well as in the employers. Trade Unionism in the United States is organized in the American Federation of Labour, which, however, makes little appeal to the polyglot proletarians who form the bulk of machine workers. An attempt was made in the Eighties to organize the unskilled in the Knights of Labour, but at that time the "class" propaganda failed to establish a permanent bond. When the Knights

became ineffective, the Western Federation of Miners started an organization on industrial lines in 1892. They became very powerful, but met with a crushing defeat during a big strike twelve years later.

From the *debris* of that fight arose the Industrial Workers of the World. Its first prominent leader was "Big Bill" Haywood, who organized the first convention at Chicago in 1905, and whose unsuccessful prosecution for murder during a labour dispute gave the new movement a great advertisement. More than half the members of the I.W.W. are foreign-born, and very many of them are not naturalized. That explains why the Government is able to deport them. The programme of the I.W.W. is to organize wage earners (or, as they love to call themselves, "wage-slaves") on a class basis as revolutionaries. Although they speak of industrial organization, and publish diagrams showing classified departments of labour, the I.W.W. has never gone beyond simple mass, or mob, action. It discards all accepted standards of ethics and religion, on the ground that they have been devised for the protection of "capitalistic society." It denies the right of the employer to exist, "for he is but a parasite on the social body, and must be driven out of existence by all available means, just as pathogenic microbes must be driven out of the patient's system." When we find the Secretary of the Australian O.B.U. writing in an official pamphlet, "Why should the workers, who have this great power, this great intelligence, this god-like ability, allow the ownership and management of the industries to rest with a small class of capitalists, many of whom are nothing but upstarts, called in the vernacular, 'cockroaches?'" we can guess where he borrowed his language. But how did he miss the "pathogenic microbes?"

But the history of the I.W.W. is a series of splits, which completely destroy its claim to solidarity. The brilliant

The I.W.W.
a Chart.

Debs was a founder of what he called the "One Big Union," but he ultimately deserted it for socialism. Another notorious leader was a Pole with an unpronounceable name who called himself Haggerty, a regular practice of the Russians and Eastern-born I.W.W. men. There were three sections in the young movement. One stood for opposition to all political action; another for opposition to all existing parties; the third stood for a combination of industrial and political action in conjunction with the Socialist parties. The Socialists were the first to draw out, almost at the start. After a stormy year or two, the personal followers of Daniel De Leon broke away and formed a rival I.W.W. at Detroit. The De Leonites are extravagant extremists who refuse to vote at political elections. The main body continued to centre at Chicago under Haywood, Trautmann, St. John, and other leaders. Consequently, when we are told that the O.B.U. is built on the cream of the thought of men like Debs, De Leon and Trautmann, its founders are combining the differences of men who would not like to be found in the same paddock.

*The Lawrence
Strike.*

The one feather in the cap of the I.W.W. is the Lawrence strike of 1910, and there its method was fully illustrated. We have accounts of this episode, both in the U.S. Labour Reports, and in the I.W.W. pamphlets. Lawrence was a town of 86,000 persons in 1910, and it was built on one industry—the textile mills. Of its population 41,000 were of foreign birth, and 32,000 of foreign parentage. The remainder included negroes. What a field for the I.W.W.! The workers' demands were simple. Their hours were reduced by a State law, and they wanted their former pay retained. The strike was the simple mass action of unskilled and unorganized workers. Haywood, the I.W.W. leader, who batted in when he heard of the trouble, could only make himself understood by waving his hands and shouting, and the polygot strike com-

miners only knew by guess what their comrades were saying. Sympathy was against the millowners, and supplies poured in from outside. The men won, but only because the town had but one class of workers, and it was possible to warn intruders away.

That is the sum total of the victories of the I.W.W. Its leaders persistently follow up labour troubles, but when they are not warned away by the local workers, they do more harm than good to the aims of the strikers. Perhaps the most convincing evidence that the I.W.W. has failed, is the secession of the body which founded it, the Western Federation of Miners, which went back to the much despised craft organization, the American Federation of Labour. We thus see from these frequent breakaways that the I.W.W. method does not stand for solidarity. The I.W.W. now represents unskilled labour only, and the elaborate diagrams of Trautmann are mere moonshine. In the opinion of Mr. G. D. H. Cole, whose ability and loyalty to labour ideals are unquestionable, "neither the doctrine of the old Chicago I.W.W. leaders, nor De Leonite class unionism, are any longer likely to make headway."

The philosopher of syndicalism is Georges Sorel. He is to it what Marx has been to socialism and Adam Smith to freetrade. He is a brilliant and well-read man, who falls into very simple fallacies. He believed himself to be a follower of Marx; but Marx, though he prophesied the revolution, did not propose to force it on the people. Sorel taught the doctrine of "frightfulness" as a first principle. According to him history shows that the middle classes under the influence of terror will submit like sheep to spoliation. In his most important book, *Reflections on Violence*, Sorel says that the future belongs to the party which makes the most daring use of the revolutionary spectre. He admits that syndicalists will be in a minority until they are successful; but he instances many great

*The
Philosophy of
Syndicalism.*

revolutions which have been brought about by minorities. He is silent about the much greater number which have failed. Sorel argues that it is wealth which corrupts politics. But has not ambition an evil influence also? "The State is coercive," he complains. But will not the O.B.U. be coercive, in which nothing can be done without the sanction of the Grand Council? Sorel condemns the politician for believing himself to be a superior person, and objects to the pretended superiority of the "intellectuals." But is he not caught in his own trap, pretending that he is intellectually superior to those who have framed other theories of government? And will not the autocratic heads of the O.B.U. consider themselves superior persons? One of its manifestoes speaks of great intelligence and god-like ability. What more need be said?

*The General
Strike.*

The first weapon of syndicalism is the "General Strike." This is not a strike against reduction of wages, or for better conditions of labour. It needs no grievance at all. It is merely a weapon to hasten the revolution, by annoying the capitalist, so that he may say: "Come along and take the old works; I am full up of trying to run them." This may seem to be far-fetched, or at least a foreign fancy. Let us see what Tom Mann says of the general strike; he is British enough for any critic. According to him, all in syndicalism leads to it and from it; it is the centre. It is the revolution itself; with it the syndicalist millennium will come automatically. "We shall prepare the way as rapidly as possible for the general strike of national proportions. This will be the actual social and industrial revolution." One day, at one word of command, the workmen in every trade, every industry, every State service will all down tools. There will be violence and sabotage. "The State will be paralysed; the army will be powerless or will revolt; the bourgeoisie will be deprived of all the comforts of life. Things will come to such a pass that the rich will flee the

country and thus the workmen come into their own." Could anyone credit such a riddle? Yet we get the same silly stuff handed out to us daily in pamphlets issued under the authority of the Workers' Industrial Union; notably one entitled *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism* prepared by a Melbourne committee; and also in the *One Big Union Herald*; the *O.B.U.*, and other publications for which some poor fools must find the money to pay the printers.

But all industrial history is against the theory that large bodies of men can be trained to down tools merely at the command of any executive. It is impossible to get unanimity even in the executive itself. Sections of the Australian movement are already calling each other "bogus." The *O.B.U.* complains that under the existing defective Labour organization men without a grievance will not strike to help men who have one. We cannot see that the *O.B.U.* will make any difference. The French Syndicalists "Big Union" broke down because the teachers or the railwaymen would not come out just when the executive ordered them. To give the General Strike any chance of success we must have, first, a deep conviction among the workers that it is necessary; secondly, the support of public opinion; thirdly, no excuse for violence. Violence produces fear and opposition in the majority of citizens, especially in a country where everybody is enfranchised, and trained from childhood to look to the Government for protection. Jaurès, the French Socialist, truly says "the general strike is a trap for the workers. It seems to them simple, but it is really very complicated." For it is founded on the huge fallacy that the workers are workers only. Being workers, they are also consumers. If a general strike took place, all transportation would stop, all shops be shut. In a day there would be no meat, no bread, no food of any kind. The workers and their families would be the first to suffer.

*The General
Strike at
Dreux.*

They would be compelled to use sabotage or strike. Syndicalist leaders may disown sabotage, but they cannot get away from it. A whiff of grapeshot, and the strike would be over. If all unionists came out, they would not have one-third of the workers (equal to one-eighth of the people) on their side; furthermore, they would find it hard to hit on a time to suit all the big unions. Merely forming One Big Union will make no difference in the conditions under which a general strike must be carried on.

Sorel was too acute a thinker to believe that the General Strike would ever become a reality. But, he says, even if it does not happen, it is a beautiful ideal, a "myth," which one must not question, but follow. "Strikes have given birth in the minds of the people to the noblest, deepest, and most inspiring of motives; but it is the general strike that groups all these ideas into a universal picture and, by bringing them together, gives to each its maximum of possible influence." But chasing myths is no good to the worker. He wants to know whether it will "cut ice" or not—that is, unless he has a good job on the strike committee. The O.B.U. propagandist fills him up with stories of successful strikes. A Melbourne pamphlet, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism* gives quite a number of examples from Queensland to show that it is easy as falling off a log for the O.B.U. to win strikes. Mr. E. H. Lane in his book, *One Big Union and Reconstruction*, says that the 1917 strike was the O.B.U. in practice. If that be so, why blame the craft unions for its failure?

As a matter of hard fact, can we believe that the general strike, or the irritating strike, or the lazy strike, will find Capitalism such an easy victim? Mr. Cole is under no such delusion, and, unlike the syndicalists he brings evidence to prove his case. Capitalism has three lines of defence. Its first effort would be to break the strike by starving the workers. If that should fail, it might provoke them to

sabotage, in order to invite the aid of the State. We have seen this frequently in log strikes; we saw it again recently, at Glasgow and Belfast. Should the second line fail, Capitalism can ask the State to nationalize the industries in order to have its dividends guaranteed. As far as strike policy is concerned, the workers would be infinitely worse off under nationalization than under private Capitalism. For the success or failure of a strike depends in the long run on public opinion; and it would be almost impossible to rally public opinion in favour of a revolutionary strike, except in countries where the bulk of the people are unfranchised. The only appeal to rouse the public would be an appeal for democracy. Syndicalism cannot make that appeal, for it is, as Lagardelle said, "a reaction against democracy." It is afraid to trust the people. "Labour loses its sting, its zeal for the Holy War," said Ben Tillett, "when it associates with democracy." To the consumer, O.B.U. or producers' ownership of the product would be no better than capitalistic ownership. I am quite aware that some of the O.B.U. leaders now say they want to hold the industries for the people; but they only say that under compulsion, and the O.B.U. doctrine is that no man is bound by his promise. Their constitution pledges them to oppose State ownership; their history proves that to be their doctrine; and when they say anything else, we do not believe them.

A very interesting question to ask an O.B.U. organizer is *After the Revolution*, "What will happen the day after the Revolution?" When the wage-earners own the workshops, the shipping, the warehouses, the farms, and all other means of production, how will they carry on? The O.B.U. propagandists tell us nothing. They simply assure the workers that the management of their industries ought to have "no fearful mysteries for them," as they are endowed with "great power, great intelligence and god-like ability." But what

authority will govern the country? If it is the One Big Union, then we are merely exchanging one kind of class rule for another. The Grand Council, elected by industrials to govern industry, will end up by becoming a political cabal. Imports and exports, storage and distribution of commodities, tariffs and excise, health, education, justice, foreign relations, and other big responsibilities must fall on some organized body. The One Big Union manifesto says "Political government is something apart from the workers . . . very few persons, even lawyers and politicians, do understand it." That is not very flattering to the workers, and offers a pessimistic outlook for the "Socialist Industrial Republic of Labour." But it is odd that almost every man on the executive of the O.B.U. is either breaking his neck to get into this political life which the workers "do not understand," or has been a candidate whom the electors turned down.

*More O.B.U.
Poetry.*

This silence about the future is not peculiar to the O.B.U. It is characteristic of all syndicalists. Sorel, De Leon, Trautmann and the rest of them all refuse to tackle this problem. "Join the O.B.U." says the *Australian Worker*, "and everything else will be given unto you." Sorel says, "Reason blinds man. He has genius only in proportion as he acts without reflection. Let us have idealism, enthusiasm and direct action. Instinct is higher than intellect." "Syndical action" he adds, "develops the intelligence, enlarges the heart, fortifies the character." We learn from a romance by Ponget and Patand, the Parisian general strike heroes, that there will be no need of a State when the O.B.U. has taken possession of the works. The brotherhood of man will be such a binding force that the functions of government will be very few and simple. The abolition of the wage system will be the death of all tyranny. There will be no need of an army, or a navy, or a huge public service. "Order will rise with the sun on the morning of

the Revolution." We may, I suppose, picture as presiding deities the dissolved executive of the Sydney Labour Council, surrounded by the 320 graded officials of the One Big Union.

In the course of a very able article in the British publication, *The Crusade*, Sidney and Beatrice Webb examine Syndicalism from this point of view. They show that in the Syndicalist State there would be the same army of officials as at present; that the worker would still have to receive wages, which the council of unions would not allow his union to fix at its own scale. This would be necessary in order to prevent one trade from exploiting the rest, and to regulate the supply of labour and the output in each industry. There would still be "bosses," as there are in Government departments at present; and experience shows that even where the working man is boss there are grievances, especially when he is a public servant. Syndicalism does not evade the tyranny of the majority; nor are the apostles of class-consciousness too tolerant of those who do not agree with them. We are already told that the O.B.U. proposes to establish "shop committees" in order to force their movement on the workers; and when once the workers are enlisted under the Grand Council, there will be no doubt about the "boss." "The one union principle is," said Mr. Gardén, "that he who does not work shall not eat." That principle may do away with the financier; but the foreman or director, even if his name is not Carnegie, will not smell more sweet; nor will efficiency and the card system be a whit more acceptable when they are enforced by a Trotsky.

If the propagandists would get down to bread and butter details like these instead of soaring in the clouds, we should know where they are. Mr. Gardén, who has nothing to say about how the scheme will arrange for the government of Australia, spreads himself on a vision that forecasts the

*Tall Talk
and Some
Criticism.*

abolition of "geographical boundaries and separate flags." He wants to see "the workers of the whole world united as one people." In the meantime, potatoes are selling at 2½/- a cwt. If the O.B.U. is not to show its fruit until the spirit of race is driven out of English and Irish, French and German, Turk and Armenian, Australian and Jap, the poor down-trodden wage-slave has still a long way to go, and the pound-a-year subscription to the O.B.U. will serve to plant daisies over the remains of the present executive, and of at least their immediate successors.

The slickest trick of the O.B.U. advocates is to cling like a parasite to various labour movements. For instance, the General Secretary asks in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of December 21, 1918, why there should be 17 unions at Cockatoo Island when one would do? At a later date he talks of "20 or 30 unions." Mr. Garden implies that the only solution is the O.B.U. But it is not the mere grouping of unions which makes the O.B.U. a "dud" for the workers. It is its objective of taking and holding all industry. The National Union of Railwaymen in England is exactly the sort of "one union" that would suit Garden Island. But the N.U.R. has never had any time for the One Big Union scheme of industrial government. Mr. Willis, President of the O.B.U., says the Big Unionism is necessary to defeat Big Capitalism. But the O.B.U. is more than Big Unionism. "It is," says one of its leaflets, "the union different to all others"; and it is just this difference that makes it a "dud." Our idea of Big Unionism is the British "Triple Alliance" of Railwaymen, Miners, and Transport Unions; but that great workers' combine, which controls three million unionists, is actually built up on the "obsolete trade unionism" which the O.B.U. proposes to kill. Mr. Arthur Rae, another leader of the O.B.U. says it is a socialistic scheme. But "John O'Rockie," a well-known socialist writer in the *Brisbane Daily Standard*, shows from its pre-

able that it is anti-socialist; and socialist parties in France and America are its very pronounced opponents.

Another admirer of the O.B.U. in the *Queensland Worker* of January 2, on a page devoted to propaganda, quotes a column from S. G. Hobson, which he says is a "find" and a "gem." It is a condemnation of capitalism with which many readers will agree; but (and this the quoter does not disclose) Mr. Hobson does not advocate the O.B.U. as a remedy. He does not want to abolish capitalism, but to harness it, by means of the National Guild scheme. Another example of plunging with a strange heifer occurs in a pamphlet by "Comrade Dodds, of Victoria," entitled, *How One Big Union Works*. It is a very interesting account of the State Meat Works in Brisbane. But there is not the slightest analogy between that, which is a Government scheme to combat profiteering, and the One Big Union project; and the author is quite well aware of the fact. He observes that the Government, after paying the workers higher wages than they could get in private employment, made a profit of £57,591; and he asks why the meat workers, "who are entitled to the full product of their labour," should hand over that sum to the State (that is to the community) any more than to the Meat Trust. Mr. Dodds conveniently overlooks the fact that peaceful industry is only possible under the protection of the State; he forgets, too, that the 310 butchers employed did not find either the capital or organization for carrying on the business. In Victoria another Big Union Advocate, Mr. Lemmon, M.L.A., said in Parliament on November 21st last, "Industrial tyrants like the Chairman of the State Harbour Trust would go down like private employers, when the workers took control." "No longer," said Mr. Lemmon, "will the lion lie down with the lamb; the lamb will be inside, and the lion will be supreme." There is not much tendency in either case to carry on industry for the

benefit of the community, as the "lion" urges when he is in a tight corner.

We might continue to show how the O.B.U. hides behind every sort of social reform in order to hoodwink the public. In one part of an official pamphlet it claims that it will "increase wages"; on the next page it boasts that it will abolish the wage system altogether. It goes into the Labour Conference to advocate the abolition of the craft union system; when it is defeated, as at Adelaide, it calmly changes front and states that it is prepared to work hand-in-hand with any method of Labour organization. But it will only work to kill them. It is part of the I.W.W. constitution to keep no agreement that does not suit it, and to use every advantage to destroy opposition. A prominent official of the O.B.U. admits that if it is not allowed to work openly in the unions, it will operate like "white acts" to destroy them. The Australian Labour Movement must make it perfectly clear that between it and the I.W.W., or its double the O.B.U., there is an unbridgeable gulf, and that no man can be a member of the two bodies. The workers must not be deceived by accusations that the Australian Labour Party is too slow. It was going strong when its leaders stumbled, and it will soon get into its stride again, if it profits by its experience. The hottest extremist is not the safest leader. Briand was the soap-box hero of Paris, and W. M. Hughes could talk red-ragery with the loudest.

*The O.B.U.
not "Dinkum."*

Let us put the acid on the O.B.U. propagandists. How many of them have been ten years in Australia? How many have been five? What are their authenticated records elsewhere, and what is their Labour record here? They cannot complain against the personal argument, for they introduced it themselves, by referring to the "effete union secretaries" who are alleged to be squealing because they will lose their positions. Yet not only does the O.B.U.

provide a number of fine jobs, but practically every man engaged in promoting it is a paid secretary of one of those despised unions. And it is notorious that most of the "effete union secretaries" would be welcomed with open arms into the O.B.U., and given a job at least as good as the billets they have.

The estimates of the One Big Union merit a little attention. The workers in the State of New South Wales, on whom it has designs, number 709,012, of whom 237,714 are organized in Trade Unions. The receipts in 1917 from these unions were £263,272, and the expenditure £238,355. O.B.U. critics estimate their expenditure for this State to be £87,000, and claim a saving of £150,000. But they make no allowance for benefits given under the present system, which (with legal expenses for wages boards, &c.) absorb about one-fourth of the receipts. As far as we can gather, the O.B.U. proposes to appoint six Federal officials at £600 a year; 19 at £500; 97 at £300; 97 at £250; 50 at £208; and 50 female typists at £130. This figures out at £83,350, and makes no provision for travelling and hotel expenses for the hundred paid organizers, or for printing, or rent, or the countless accessories which make up a balance sheet. An element of humour enters into this part of the scheme. Mr. E. H. Lane in his book, *One Big Union*, lays down the doctrine of equality of payment as an ideal of the scheme. "Is not every worker in the community," asks Mr. Lane, "just what his heredity, qualities, environment, and opportunity have made him? Why then should any section of the workers, for performing certain work, superior though it may be, expect greater reward than other workers who also give their best to the community? Ethically the pernicious system of present day labour reward is in direct antagonism to the grand ideals of the Labour movement." We leave this conundrum to the O.B.U. organizers. We will also ask them why the "female

*O.B.U.
Finance.*

typists" are paid less than the men, in "direct antagonism to another grand ideal of the Labour movement?"

Further, what right has the O.B.U. to assume that it will enrol 237,000 members in New South Wales? The French "Confédération Générale" never enrolled one-third of the organized workers; the British Syndicalists never became a body worth considering; the I.W.W. never amounted to one twenty-fifth part of the American Federation of Labour, or, if we reckon paying members, not half of that. There is nothing in the ability or character of the O.B.U. leaders to lead us to believe that they will do better. Take away a number of youthful unskilled labourers, mostly the foreign element on the waterside, and the field for revolutionary unionism is exhausted.

"Literature?" It seems to us that the One Big Union started before it was ready, and got bushed in the dark. "Give the workers One Big Union literature," says one leader, "and they will soon be advocates of the only system that matters to-day." But, unfortunately, what O.B.U. propagandists call "literature" is flapdoodle that asserts everything and explains nothing. Each leader contradicts the other. The *Australian Worker* for some weeks contained a couple of columns which it called "One Big Union Shots." Here is a specimen: "The O.B.U. scheme stands for a system under which your purchasing power will be equal to your producing power." We are not told how. In any case, if your purchasing power is not better than your producing power, you will spend all your days just doing enough work to be able to get enough to eat to enable you to work to get enough to eat—and so on to the grave. Another shot is: "The One Big Union is the great revolutionizing force that will secure opportunities for better lives and work for those who work." But there is not a hint of how this is going to happen. That kind of "moonshine" literature reminds us of what someone stated in the press during the recent influenza

scare; "As the result of inoculation against influenza," said this bright young man, "all my corns dropped out." He must have been one of the young men who are writing One Big Union literature.

PART III

SUGGESTIONS FOR RECONSTRUCTION

Amid all this criticism it may reasonably be expected that we should set forth in our turn a way to improve the position of the workers. The development of a capitalist One Big Union with its tendency to wage-restriction, ruthless profiteering, and greedy competition is immoral, cowardly and unchristian, and must be combated. But the way to fight it is not to create in opposition to it another immoral, cowardly, selfish, exclusive combination of wage-earners, which makes no distinction between the innocent and the guilty. In a country where every adult has the franchise, and where the wage-earners, in alliance with all sufferers from the domination of Capitalism, have an enormous preponderance in numbers, the true policy is to organize and socially educate that majority until their sense of citizenship prevails over the evil.

It is generally conceded that the present conditions of the working classes is much better than it was a century ago. For this improvement craft unionism is entitled to take the chief credit. But is not so certain that Australian workers, as a whole, are as well off as they were at the foundation of the Commonwealth, in spite of the mass of industrial legislation which has been passed since, and in spite of the fact that Labour Governments have been in office for long periods. Wages are higher, certainly, and working conditions have been much improved; but huge combinations of capitalists have been able to force up the cost of living more quickly than legislation has increased

wages. The problem of the day, from the workers' and consumers' point of view, is how to combat that tendency. The rate of wages has increased 30 per cent, but the cost of living has gone up 30 per cent. It was, perhaps, natural that Labour organizations, helped on by disappointed agitators, should look for new methods of restoring the balance—among them the more effective consolidation of the workers. "Big Unionism," said one of the propagandists, "is necessary." We approve that opinion; but big unionism does not, by any means, confine us to the One Big Union scheme, which is likely to be a very exclusive affair in spite of its title. The workers want the support of all unionists, and of twice as many more people outside the unions.

Why did Labour fail to attain its ideals? It is easy to blame the politicians, but we are faced with a very awkward answer. In 1906 there were 175,529 trade unionists in Australia; in 1917 there were 364,187. But in 1906 Labour was in the ascendancy in the Federal Parliament, and in five out of six States; in 1917 it had lost all but the State of Queensland. The leaders of twelve years ago held Australia with one-third of the forces which are enrolled in trade unions to-day. The war cannot be altogether blamed, for there were signs of trouble before the war broke out. The Sydney Labour Council, which sponsored this new scheme of organization, is itself shorn of many influential unions, to which it is sending out S.O.S. signals to return. Generals who fail are usually cashiered. Can we, therefore, continue to trust the sagacity and knowledge of those leaders who failed to hold the line, or should we blame them for the failure? We believe we should. They did not realize that organized Labour represented not more than 8 per cent. of the population; they ran their movement as if the only persons concerned in the Labour policy were the industrial workers of Sydney.

*Why Did
Labour Fail?*

The cause of the labour rift will be found in the rise of the so-called "industrial section" of the Labour party, five or six years ago. This section antagonized, not only the unionists who are not in sympathy with extreme revolutionary policy, but the large body of unorganized electors who support Labour representatives in Parliament. The primary producers exceed in number the industrial population by four per cent.; and proprietors of industries who do not employ assistants are a body quite half as large as the whole strength of unionism. Time and again the writer has been asked in Country centres why the Labour Party will not give reasonable consideration to a broad Country policy. These are the factors that lost the Labour Party its control of the country; and, to complete the débâcle, these are the weak points which the I.N.W. have seized upon and accentuated. Labour leaders, including those who are now masquerading as "Nationalists," must bear full responsibility for this. There were able men among them who lacked the courage to tackle the foreign poison, every trace of which must be driven out of the Labour Party before it will get the confidence of the people again.

It is not true that Labour has made a fair trial of political methods. It is less than 20 years since the first Labour Government took office, and the movement had to sober after the first intoxication of power. What great movement has ever attained its ideals in one generation? In every human organization we must have failures; by them we rise to greater things. The generation which is growing up with a knowledge that every schoolboy has an equal chance is the generation that will achieve democratic ideals. The rapid success of Labour at the polls was its ruin. A body of men unaccustomed to the advantages of power had power suddenly thrust upon them. Men who had to work hard found that comrades, not more qualified than themselves to govern the country, were lifted into

Parliament and into the Cabinet. The Labour Leagues became at once centres of intrigue for selection, groups of head-hunters scoured the lanes and by-ways, and the dead were mingled with the gaoled in selection ballots. Men who were not prepared to submit to these orgies drew back in disgust, and the unfit man was chosen to represent Labour in Parliament, when he did not fall over the balcony. Labour missed a big chance of instituting a great democratic reform. If it had made a rule that no person was eligible for selection until he had passed an examination in general and social education, it would have earned the esteem not only of its followers, but of other political parties which are no better in this respect than itself. The inevitable happened. Men who were not fit to rule succumbed to the temptations of the political game, and many a Labour supporter was disheartened at the reckless management of the party, except, perhaps, in Queensland. Then came the crosscription fight, and the wreck of Parliamentary Labour through the mad ambition of Mr. Hinghes.

In Britain Labour has never obtained any real influence *British* in politics, though, no doubt, it will become powerful under *Experience* the new franchise. Yet even there advanced Labour men lend no countenance to direct action. A Queensland Labour writer thinks W. W. Craik's *History of the Modern British Working Class Movement* a sterling contribution to Labour literature. We agree with him. Mr. Craik is a keen and consistent advocate of Industrial Unionism, which he never confounds with Syndicalism or industrial ownership. He says that the fundamental error of the Syndicalists consists in rejecting the political consequences which the building up of a powerful industrial organization involves. It is one thing to get a clique into a workshop and call it a shop committee, and quite another to avoid friction between it and the workers. He sums up by saying (page 93), "Instead of trying to accomplish unity at the apex,

without regard to the divisions at the base, instead of trying to realize 'One Big Union' of the workers as a class directly, industrial unionists have come to direct their practical efforts towards securing more unity at the bottom, towards uniting the workers within each industry as a necessary prelude to the unification of the workers as a class. The Triple Alliance already foreshadows future developments towards working class unity." When we take into account the standing of British Trade Unionism in the estimation of the community and the Government, and compare it with the attitude of Government and people towards the I.W.W., we cannot have even a momentary doubt which is the better model to copy.

*Education the
Solution.*

Our present social system is bad, but it is not bankrupt. In Australia it is much further from bankruptcy than in European countries, or even than in England and America. Australia has not created, or imported, an immense population of unfranchised foreigners who have been bred in semi-slavery; nor has it developed those huge sweated industries which form cities in America. Unlike all other countries, we have the ballot box at every adult's hand. The proper solution of the difficulty for us lies in social education. We should put Australia first, instead of Capitalism or Industrialism.

We must not look at progress as merely a material conception to be estimated in pounds, shillings and pence. The love of wealth and luxury which accompanies unrestricted materialism is ruinous alike to society and to the individual. The materialistic view of progress is at the root of three great fallacies. The first is, that national or individual wealth is synonymous with success; the second, that Capitalism is necessarily robbery; the third, arising out of the second, is that destitution is incurable except by revolution. The confutation of these fallacies lies in the province of education: it must be effected by awakening the

social conscience, teaching the solidarity of society, and uprooting class-consciousness in practice as well as theory. If national education had an adequate spiritual side, these errors would be corrected.

It is this wrong education that leads workers into the gravest economic error of Symbolism—belief that the community is divided into two classes, the capitalists who own everything and produce nothing, and the workers who own nothing and produce everything, and that between these two classes there is irreconcilable opposition. It is *not* true that these two classes form the whole community. Even if Labour were not restricted to wage-carriers, as the One Big Union would confine it, there is a third class greater than both of them put together—the middle class, which includes professional people, farmers, shopkeepers, tradespeople, and even workers who own property. Moreover the vital fact is overlooked that all the three classes are also consumers, and their natural wants must be attended to daily.

Nor is it true that capital produces nothing and labour everything. The industrialist overstates his case when he claims a right to the whole produce of his work. For he does not create all wealth. He requires, for one thing, raw material upon which to use his labour, and surely raw material has value, and is wealth. Moreover he requires the protection of society, in order that his work may be carried on, peacefully and regularly. To give him all the product would not do away with injustice. If the miners owned the mine in which they worked, and the Queensland butcher the whole proceeds of the animal he killed, inequalities would still persist, for all labour is not equally remunerative. Again, if the joint workers in an industry owned the whole product of their work, they would naturally have the right to fix prices to suit themselves. We should then be merely substituting the Capitalism of miners, or of butchers, for the present system—which would

*The Two
Classes
Fallacy.*

be of advantage not to the rest of the community, who are consumers. The objective of the British Independent Labour Party, "national ownership of industry, with control by the workers" seems to us capable of leading to a more equitable solution of the problem, and one which will prevent exploitation both of the worker and of the consumer.

"The right of Labour to a life of comfort and self-expression," says Mr. Cole, "is quite independent of whether it creates wealth or not." It depends on the fact that the worker is a human being, with a soul to be saved. If we deny that, we deny the right of living to doctors, teachers, priests, philosophers, and all others who help to make the world habitable, but do not add to its material wealth. The actual worker is entitled to the fullest possible share in the control of the conditions under which he works. But he must call in the consumer to help him in balancing living conditions; and the consumer can only act through Parliament, which represents him.

*The Three
Systems*

Three methods of equalizing social conditions have either been tried in modern times or have attracted considerable attention. The first is the capitalistic system, under which we suffer at present. The second is, management by the consumers through the State—a method generally called Socialism, or Collectivism. The third, management in the interest of the producers, we have been considering as Industrialism. It is generally admitted that the first method, unrestricted Capitalism has failed. It is proved to be cruel, unjust, and unsocial. Where the One Big Union threw a brick at it, Pope Leo assailed it with a salvo of artillery. But it is strongly entrenched, and can only be ejected from its supremacy by thorough organization, and the solidarity of workers and consumers. The socialistic system has lost its attraction for the worker. It is just as much in the interest of the consumer as the present

system is in the interest of the Capitalist. The Socialist State would be the servile State. The worker would be no better off as an employee (and a conscripted one at that) under a Government Department, than he is under a huge trust. That brings us to the third system.

We have argued that industrial ownership would be as *These Factors are Necessary.* unjust to the community as capitalistic ownership, or as consumers' ownership. The three factors must be combined. There is only one real Big Union, and that is humanity. Continents and nations are now but parts of a wonderfully intricate system of production, distribution and exchange, and humanity can only perform its functions successfully if it aims at unity and not strife. The quarrel between capital and labour has been likened to a quarrel between the two blades of a pair of scissors. If they hack notches out of each other, the chief result is to impair the cutting capacity of both. A store of capital is required to keep organized industry going; for, if everybody spent all his income as he receives it, only articles for daily consumption would be purchased. Even under socialism or syndicalism a store of capital—foodstuffs, clothing, building materials, machinery, and so forth—must be collected. Otherwise we should be mere nomads, living in caves, and spending our days in foraging for meals. It is capital that enables the worker to spend days, months, and years, on a big job, and to regulate his life in orderly fashion. This capital may be held by individuals, by joint stock companies, by the State, or by syndicalist combinations of workers; but it should be used only for the general good, not for the advantage of one class. Capital is no person's exclusive property; it is a trust for the benefit of all. And that is the point we must always keep before us when we plan to adjust living conditions.

Perhaps we shall best realize that capital is a public trust *Look to the* by considering first the case of land. Land is the third *Land.*

great factor in production, but the One Big Union is strangely silent about it. Those who would rule the world from a spot in the centre of Trautmann's circle, forget the greater part of the community, who obtain their living directly from the land, and who for the most part are not wage-earners. Though they are in their own way capitalists, they form no part of what the industrialist includes in the term Capitalism. By neglecting for a moment the highly capitalized, quantitative production of machine-made goods, in order to examine the land system, we shall find help in the solution of the labour problem. There we can study "production for use," which is a watchword of industrialism; and there we can see how the worker may realize not only the full value of his product, but the control of his labour as well.

Not that our land system is perfect—far from it. But we can plainly perceive its defects and devise remedies. The defects of our land system are the power of landowners to hold large tracts of country for speculation; the exclusion of workers from unused land; and excessive gains through these evils. Most errors in land legislation arise from the wrong conception of man's title to land. For this we have to blame the Roman law, which held that the owner had an unrestricted right to deal with his land as he thought fit. He could transfer or transmit, use, abuse, or not use at all, take all the produce, or let the land to any person for any period, purpose or rent he chose. This principle was extended by the Code Napoléon to all kinds of ownership; and thus has grown up the bad principle, the root of all our social evils, that not only the landlord, but the capitalist, has a right "to do what he likes with his own."

Principles of Land Ownership. This is altogether contrary to the Christian concept, which regards wealth or property as a trust given to man for his use. No person has the right to reserve for himself

more land than he can put to use, or to hold his land idle while any of his fellow citizens need it. In the thirteenth century, Pope Clement IV ruled that strangers could occupy and use one-third of an estate which the proprietor refused, or failed, to cultivate himself. In the days before landlords were allowed to enclose and keep idle large tracts of cultivable land in Britain, it was no uncommon thing for a peasant to run his furrow, without asking permission, into any monastery land which was not in use, and to draw a crop from it. The owner was entitled to a fair rent charge. If we put those principles into practice, not only in our agricultural areas, but in urban and city lands, we should compel owners by a super-tax to put idle land to its proper use, and so prevent them from holding it for speculative purposes. The person who holds up land in city and country, and prevents the natural development of a district until it is made valuable by surrounding owners, is a stocker and should be discouraged. Thus from the Christian point of view land is a trust; and similarly from the same point of view, capital is a trust.

The problem of profits can also be illustrated from the land, because the division of returns from land is comparatively simple. The first charge is economic rent; then comes interest on the capital employed in working the land. If the capital belongs to the tenant, he is entitled to the interest. The unearned increment, which is made by the community, should belong to the community. Minerals such as coal, oil, etc., should belong to the community, after full allowance is made for the cost of any enterprise which leads to their discovery or development. By analogy we may ascertain the true limits of private ownership, and the proportion in which returns should be divided between capital and labour. Would it not be possible to apply agricultural ideas of organization to our industrial system? The advantages, especially in the harmonious combination

of various factors in production, would make this far preferable to any organization built on the class-war theory.

The Christian Solution.

Reforms not based on moral truth must fail. It is not true that Christian morality was framed, or can be diverted, to bolster up Capitalism. Whether capitalists or workers, those who in practice reject the Ten Commandments, are offenders against Christianity. The remedy is to spiritualize public opinion; and we must begin with education. If the teacher and the writer hold up material progress and trade efficiency as the ends of national greatness, then the evils which follow those false ideals will certainly continue to plague us. It is strange to find men steeped in modern thought, when they are worried by the fast growing class-hatred, looking wistfully back to the organization of mediæval craft guilds, which certainly did assure independence to the worker; and frequently these thinkers are compelled by the pressure of public opinion, which has been formed by the long falsification of history, to apologize for praising anything "mediæval," and to protest that they do not suggest anything like a return to those benighted days.

The Guild Scheme.

Let us note a few of the provisions which regulated the workers' lives when England was "merry England," and the barons were, at least, not coal barons. Many of the evils of modern capitalism are caused by the efforts of unscrupulous men to corner materials and trade. The Guild remedy was to ration materials, and heavy penalties were inflicted on master craftsmen who obtained unfair advantage. It is interesting to note that when at the outbreak of the great war, Capitalism failed to answer the demands of Government, there was a return to this "mediæval" method; and the big industrialists did not like it, though they had to submit to it. The Guild Council undertook food inspection, and placed its hall-mark on all classes of products to guarantee their quality. No merchant was allowed

to forestall the market in wine or wheat; on the contrary, he was compelled to share a shipment with his fellow merchants, and was not allowed to charge them an increase on cost price. Not only did the Guild guarantee the quality of products, but the Guild Council of each industry fixed the selling price. The Guilds also had "sumptuary" laws directed against luxury.

A vast amount of wit has been directed against these laws up to the beginning of this century; but to-day we have some of the brightest thinkers in England harking back to the Guild regulations, and proposing adaptations which would probably have been brought about by evolution, if the Guilds had continued during the industrial development. The financial editor of *The Times*, Mr. Hartley Withers, in one of his fine books, points out that the evils of over-production and under-production are chiefly brought about by production for luxury and not for use. Many writers declare that, if profiteering were prevented, the chief motive of anarchism would be destroyed. "Fixing prices," says Mr. A. J. Pentz, "is the problem of the future," and the same writer substantiates with much evidence a claim that the degradation of the workers is very materially brought about by the abandonment of craftsmanship for mere quantitative production, which causes the substitution of unskilled for skilled labour. We even find such an extremist as Prince Kropotkin stating that "most of what the Socialists aim at existed in the mediæval city."

Therefore a strong movement (*doctrinaire, no doubt*) is making progress in England for the government of industry by National Guilds, the Guild in this case being the nation-wide industrial union. Some writers, who appreciate the value of a catchword, prefer to call it "Guild Socialism," as it relies on the co-operation of the State, representing the consumers. In this connection it is interesting to learn

*Modern
Guilds.*

from the *New Age* of January 9, 1919, that we shall be able to study the National Guild in action immediately. The Italian Federation of Labour is a well organized body which goes to work in a business-like way. It proposes, for instance, to manage the cultivation of land and the carrying out of public works by co-operative societies of workers. But the project to which we call attention is more significant still. It appears that the Allies are lending the Italian Government a number of merchant ships, to help in reorganizing their trade. The Italian National Federation of Seamen, a highly organized body, immediately applied to the Reconstruction Committee to have some of these ships handed over to them, and placed under their management. The Committee approved the scheme; and the Premier notified the Seamen that, as soon as they formed a legally constituted co-operative Society, the Minister of Transport would allot them the ships they were prepared to manage. The Society was formed in September, and the Minister notified. It is quite likely that the scheme is at work now. There we have the One Big Union, minus class-war and sabotage.

Co-operation.

There is no need to confine ourselves to the Italian Seamen in order to see the effects of constructive methods. The wonderfully successful systems of agricultural co-operation in Ireland, Belgium, Holland and Italy, and the long-existing consumers' co-operative schemes in England lead us to believe that, if the promoters of class-war propaganda would give up their foolish get-rich-quick confidence schemes, and devote their "great intelligence and god-like ability" to devising a system of industrial co-operation, they would create in their followers at each step a greater sense of responsibility, a more settled self-reliance, a stronger will to win than ever came from revolutionary anarchism. There is no nobler man than the man who has risen to higher things by honest effort; and there is no

warrant in all history for the belief that ascendancy gained by passion and plunder ever attained the stability necessary for success.

It may be objected that these methods are slow. All the *True Progress is Slow.* better; no reform worthy of the name was ever brought about in a hurry. Much was expected from the French Revolution; but many of our social troubles, among them the irresponsibility of Capitalism, are fruits of the hasty principles then accepted. Noble ideals were expressed by the founders of American Independence; but it was not stabilized until its hasty generalizations were tried in the fire by the War of Secession. Foolish people are now congratulating parties who seem to have the upper hand for the moment in Russia; but the man who expects any reasonable order from the welter in which Europe is now plunged is very sanguine indeed.

What is needed in Australia is to strengthen the trade *The Needs of Australia.* unions, not only in membership, but also in organization. Firmness and courage in the elected officers is a necessity. All the rights of unions should be insisted on—refusal to work with non-unionists, or to handle non-union material; annual agreements with the employers, all falling due on the one day, for every precaution should be used against the neutralizing of agreements by excessive price-raising. Since it is found that an appreciable number of politicians fail to put energy into their work, or are failures under trial, shorter parliaments might be advantageous. The cost of an extra election would be more than made up by the increased responsibility of members towards expenditure. Workers should persistently agitate for greater control of their industries; for, as we have shown, capital must be looked upon as a public trust. They should carefully avoid specious schemes of profit-sharing, and fallacious co-operative proposals not accompanied by an adequate voice in the management. The danger is that these schemes

may not only weaken unionism, but may also make the workers joint co-spirators with the capitalists in exploiting consumers. The biggest problem from the labour organizers' point of view is the unskilled worker. As the industrial union is developed, this labour should as far as possible be bound up with the union; and every effort should be made to eliminate unskilledness by educating the public to prefer quality in production to quantity. There is not the slightest doubt that this can be done. Take, for example, the different views of the English and the Australian worker on slop-made clothing. The ready-made article is the rule in England; it is still the exception in Australia, though a big effort is now being made to force the quantitative, cheap, and shoddy article on the workers. This discrimination should be applied to furniture, to buildings, and to everything that goes to form the independent and manly character of the working man.

As a beginning, trade unions should demand that all public activities concerned with industry or education be taken out of the hands of politicians and civil servants, and placed under boards on which the workers are represented. These representatives should be chosen, not by Ministers, but by those whom they represent. The Trade Unions should be represented on a Council of Education in order that civic responsibility should be impressed upon a dry-as-dust Department. Similarly the Railway Commission, the Public Works Commission, and the headquarters of the Lands and Mining Administrations should contain men directly representing labour, in order that the interests of the workers may not be overlooked by political place-hunters. Such practical reform would do more for the emancipation of the workers, than all the propagandists of the One Big Union—even if they spent their lives in conclave writing, as their General Secretary puts it, "declarations of independence that are rekindling in the

hearts of millions, the smouldering embers of human liberty; yea, more, striking from the limbs of the Australian workmen the chains and shackles of corporate bondage."

One other aspect of this visionary scheme strikes us. We have heard advocates of the One Big Union say that the ideal is good, even if the founders are weak. "Let us form the Big Union," they say, "and we shall soon find the men to manage it." There are two answers to that. The One Big Union scheme is bad, because it is on the wrong track. Ownership of the works by the workers is not only unsound economically, as we have shown, but places the One Big Union in direct opposition to the rest of the community, without whose support it cannot succeed. Secondly, the chief argument of the founders is that all other Labour men are wrong, and they are the sole proprietors of the genuine article. They say that their plan is to build from the bottom up; but they are trying to build from the roof down. The workers have the foundations ready at hand, in the Trade Unions. Let them build on that base, and not be tempted to try Yankee imitations. When American Labour conditions are as good as ours, it will be time enough for us to copy their methods—and then only their successful methods.

BOOKS WHICH THROW LIGHT ON
SYNDICALISM.

The following books and pamphlets have been consulted in the preparation of this inquiry:—

- Troutman (W. E.) *One Great Union.*
Troutman (W. E.) *Why Strikes are Lost.*
Lane (Ernest H.) *The One Big Union and Reconstruction.*
John O'Rourke—*The Coming Slavery and the Future of the Workers.*
Anderson (Norman C.) *The One Big Union for Australia.*
Dodds (A. D.) *How One Big Union Works.*
Workers' International Industrial Union, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism.*
Crak (Will. W.) *Outlines of the History of the British Working-Class Movement.*
Sorel (Georges) *Reflections sur la Violence.*
Laregle (H. de) *La Confédération Générale du Travail.*
Lerise (L.) *Syndicalism in France.*
Haywood and Bohm—*Industrial Socialism.*
Cole (G. D. H.) *The World of Labor.*
Cole (G. D. H.) *Self-Government in Industry.*
Macdonald (Ramsay) *Syndicalism.*
Macdonald (Ramsay) *Social Unrest.*
Snowden (Philip) *Socialism and Syndicalism.*
Maan (Tom) *From Single-Tax to Syndicalism.*
Penty (A. J.) *Old Worlds for New.*
Bethhofer and Reckitt—*The Meaning of National Guilds.*
Holson and Orage—*National Guilds.*
Webb (Sidney and Beatrice) *History of Trade Unionism.*
Webb (Sidney and Beatrice) *Industrial Democracy.*
Hussien (Joseph, S.J.) *The World Problem, Capital, Labour and the Church.*
Belloc (Hilaire) *History of England, since 1688.*
Belloc (Hilaire) *The Servile State.*
Ryan (John A., D.D.) *Distributive Justice.*
Maan, Sievers, and Cox—*The Real Democracy.*
Withers (Hartley) *Waste.*

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